

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hunting of Big Game (Deer)

Refuge Name: Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Refuge – Date Established: August 11, 1964

Refuge – Authorities: 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act); 16 U.S.C. § 460K-1 (Refuge Recreation Act)

Refuge Purpose(s):

“...for uses as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

“...suitable for – (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreation development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species...” 16 U.S.C. § 460K-1 (Refuge Recreation Act)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

“The Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

Description of Use: This Compatibility Determination updates and supercedes the Compatibility Determination developed concurrently with the refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and authorized in 2004. This Compatibility Determination will provide a continuation of managed deer hunts on Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge lands.

Refuge-specific special deer hunts will be the only authorized hunts permitted on the Refuge. The Service will work closely with Missouri Department of Conservation to determine dates, bag limits and harvest methods.

Only white-tailed deer will be allowed to be hunted during the managed hunts. No other species will be hunted on the Refuge.

Hunting activities allowed on the Refuge:

Clarence Cannon NWR

- Migratory Birds
 - Closed to hunting migratory birds.
- Upland game
 - Closed to upland game.
- Big Game (Deer and Turkey)
 - Open only to special state-managed deer hunts.
 - Closed to turkey hunting.

A high priority for the Refuge is to provide compatible wildlife-dependent public uses such as hunting. Providing access for youth and persons with disabilities to Refuge programs and facilities is another high priority. Accommodating individuals with disabilities typically entails granting exemptions to Refuge regulations for the purpose of enabling those persons to engage in compatible activities on the Refuge. The most common type of exemption given will be authorizations of limited duration which allow the use of motorized vehicles on existing roads and trails.

Availability of Resources:

The hunting program is designed to be administered by utilizing existing refuge resources. At the present level of hunting use there are adequate refuge resources to implement the hunting program. Law enforcement is the primary tool necessary to ensure proper and safe administration of this use. Clarence Cannon NWR has one full-time Land Management Law Enforcement Officer, whose salary is funded through the annual Refuge budget. Additionally, the local State Conservation Officers and County Sheriff's Office provide additional assistance when requested.

Hunters use the existing network of roads to access areas open to hunting. Parking lots, restrooms, leaflets, and signs are provided by the refuge for use by hunters. The refuge also provides staff and volunteers to maintain these facilities and disseminate information to hunters.

Additional expenses include boundary posting and other signage, maintenance of parking lots and gates, and other hunting specific activities.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Staff monitors species population and harvest trends with assistance from the Missouri Department of Conservation to ensure that target species can be hunted at the refuge without appreciably adversely affecting populations. These monitoring activities include direct observation, consultation with State and Service species specialists, and review of current species survey information and research. Recent assessments of species hunted in the vicinity of the Refuge indicate that those species are not facing a general decline. Each state manages resident game across broad landscapes and allows harvest of annual surpluses through recreational

hunting. Although hunting causes mortality and temporary disturbance to deer, harvesting populations within the carrying capacity of existing habitat insures long-term health and survival of the species.

The Refuge restricts or excludes hunting activities on portions of the Refuge. Relatively small areas of the Refuge are not hunted due to safety concerns. Special managed hunts are used to manage hunting pressure and overall harvest at appropriate. Conditions that might precipitate discussion for the need to employ additional managed hunts include but are not limited to changes in game species populations or distribution, increased participation leading to safety or quality of experience concerns, or public requests for additional recreational activity.

The Refuge is open during the state hunting seasons to other priority public uses such as fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. In order to safely provide both hunting and non-hunting recreational uses, the Refuge limits the number of managed hunts, restricts public access during the hunts, and enforces a series of Refuge-specific hunting regulations. Refuge management activities are accomplished without conflict with hunting activities through the use of administratively closed areas, timing of hunts, and methods of hunt.

Public Review and Comment:

The Service solicited public comments for a Draft 2014 Hunting Chapter of the Visitor Services Plan for Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge and its supporting draft Environmental Assessment that described the hunting activities in this Compatibility Determination. A 30-day review period began August 25, 2014 through September 25, 2014. In addition, the draft Compatibility Determination was out for a 14-day public review beginning September 4, 2014 through September 18, 2014. Copies of the documents were posted on the Refuge website and were available upon request. News releases announcing the availability of the documents for review were sent to numerous local media outlets, post offices and libraries. Letters were sent to other federal and state agencies and state and local officials.

Determination:

☐ Use is Not Compatible

☒ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. All applicable State and Federal Regulations will apply.
2. Hunting is allowed on most of the refuge. Restrictions apply only in designated areas.
3. For authorized hunting activities, hunting is allowed one-half hour before legal shooting time to one-half hour after legal shooting time.
4. Firearms are allowed for hunting on designated areas of the Refuge.

5. Refuge specific authorization is required for all special hunts.
6. All personal property must be removed at the end of each day.
7. No motorized vehicles are allowed within the hunting units except at designated parking areas and roads or by Special Use Permit.

Justification:

In view of the above and with the stipulations previously described, hunting will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes of the refuge or the mission of the Refuge System. Hunting seasons and bag limits are established by the Missouri Department of Conservation and are generally adopted by the refuge. These restrictions ensure the continued well-being of overall populations of game animals. Hunting does result in the taking of many individuals within the overall population, but restrictions are designed to safeguard and maintain adequate breeding populations from year to year. Specific refuge regulations address equity and quality of opportunity for hunters, and help safeguard refuge habitat. Disturbance to other fish and wildlife does occur, but this disturbance is generally short-term and adequate habitat occurs in adjacent areas.

The special state-managed deer hunts contribute to the removal of a portion of the deer herd and will help control the population at a level to ensure habitat protection from over-browsing and maintain the health of the herd. The deer herd is studied regularly through survey methods and to not continue with current harvest rates may cause appreciable damage to refuge habitat. The existing deer population can support the removal of deer by hunting and still maintain the herd stability and provide a recreational opportunity.

Conflicts between hunters are localized and are addressed through law enforcement and continuous review and updating to State and refuge hunting regulations. Conflicts between other various user groups are minor given the limited number of managed hunts and restricted access by the public during the hunts. Currently hunters, bird watchers, wildlife observers, hikers, anglers, and photographers can equally enjoy recreational activities in a safe manner.

The stipulations listed above will ensure proper control of the means of use and provide management flexibility should detrimental impacts develop. Allowing this use also furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife, and plant resource on the refuge.

Signature: _____
Jason Wilson, Refuge Manager (Signature and Date)

Concurrence: _____
Charles W. Blair, Regional Chief (Signature and Date)

Mandatory 15-year Re-evaluation Date: August 2029

Compatibility Determination

Regional Office Review Documentation and Routing Slip

Compatibility Determination forms, and appropriate NEPA documentation, are completed by the Project Leader in accordance with policy and following suitable public review and comment. Project Leader will sign the compatibility determination.

Are CDs part of a CCP? Yes No X

Route to	Title	Responsibility	surname/date
1	Refuge Historic Preservation Officer:	Reviews for NEPA compliance, cultural resource protection issues, and completeness of documentation.	
2	Chief, Visitor Services and Outreach:	Reviews for consistency with public use policies, and consistency with station public use management plans. Alerts Supervisor if precedent setting.	
3	Regional Refuge Biologist:	Reviews for biological soundness and consistency with principles of fish and wildlife management, and consistency with station habitat and wildlife management plans.	
4	Refuge Supervisor:	Reviews for overall consistency with Refuge Purpose, Mission, Goals and Objectives, and for overall clarity of reasoning and sound professional judgment.	
5	Division of Conservation Planning	If draft CDs are part of a draft CCP, hold signed CDs; then forward them with the final CCP to the Regional Chief.	
6	Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System:	Reviews for overall compatibility with Refuge System Mission, Regional consistency, and adherence to Service Policies. Alerts Regional Director to sensitive or potentially controversial decisions.	Signs CD
Last	Regional Historic Preservation Officer:	Signed original is returned to field station. Copy is filed with RFO files.	Files copy of CD

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